

### **PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT**

The Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (AZRSA) has a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). The Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) had the opportunity to ask questions or give input into CSPD activities and has reviewed and approved the CSPD Plan.

#### **(a) Data System On Personnel and Personnel Development**

**Development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development.**

The AZRSA uses several data systems to collect personnel information. These systems include the Human Resource Information Solution (HRIS) of the Arizona Department of Administration and an AZRSA CSPD database. Both contain up-to-date information on all employed individuals. Ad hoc reports can be generated for each classification category to provide affirmative action information, assist in manpower planning, track academic degree level, identify major areas of study and qualified staff data, provide information to project retirement dates, identify diversity information, and provide other data as needed.

The staff development and training manager maintains additional records and documentation related to staff training, individual staff CSPD plans for retraining to meet the qualified staff standard and professional certification records.

The AZRSA management information system, Integrated Rehabilitation Information System (IRIS), is also utilized to determine caseload size and number of clients served to be used for forecasting future personnel needs.

From these sources of information, the qualified personnel needs and development of staff are analyzed on an annual basis. Included in this analysis are:

- Number of personnel employed by job category.
- Progress in meeting agency goals for serving rehabilitation clients with qualified staff.
- Future personnel needs to include growth, turnover history, caseload sizes, succession planning, diversity management and other relevant factors.
- Educational levels of all staff for projecting budgets for tuition reimbursement and identification of training needs.
- The numbers of personnel enrolled in institutions of higher education that prepare students in rehabilitation counseling and related counseling fields.
- The progress of individuals who are working on meeting the "qualified staff" standard.

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- How well staff development and training objectives for the year have been met.
- An analysis of dollars spent annually for tuition reimbursements, as well as reimbursement for certification exams and renewals.

##### (1) Qualified Personnel Needs

The available data provide the following information about the current status of qualified staff.

##### (A) Total Number of Staff:

The AZRSA believes that the current staffing pattern is correct to meet the needs of current clients. Staffing has increased from 303 FTEs in calendar year 2007 to our current level of 336. The number of clients served by each VR counselor for planning purposes is 75.

	2007	2008
Total Number of Staff	257	335
Rehabilitation Services Specialist III (RSS III)	168	223
Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation & Mobility Spec.	11	13
Rehabilitation Representative	30	37
Rehabilitation Supervisor	26	34
Rehabilitation Services Technician	22	28

The total number of staff hired in 2007 is as follows:

Number of new positions established in 2007	34	0
Number of staff hired in 2007:	59	
Rehabilitation Services Specialist III	47	
Rehabilitation Program Representative	2	
RIS and O & M Specialist	3	
Supervisor	7	

The following number of staff meet CSPD requirements, as follows:

Number of Rehabilitation Service Specialist III/ RIS and O & M Specialists/Program Reps/Supervisors/ Managers who Meet Qualified Staff Standard	124	156
Rehabilitation Service Specialist III	84	91
Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation and Mobility Spec.	8	9
Rehabilitation Program Representative	14	28
Rehabilitation Supervisor	18	28

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Number of CSPD agreements signed by new hires	50	60
Total CSPD agreements signed to date		166
Number of new hires who met standard		6
Number of qualified staff who resigned		12

Staff who do not meet CSPD requirements are as follows:

	2007	2008
Number of Rehabilitation Service Specialist III/Program Reps/ Supervisors Who Do Not Meet Standard	111	151
Rehabilitation Services Supervisors	8	6
Rehabilitation Program Representatives	16	9
Rehabilitation Teachers	4	4
Rehabilitation Services Specialists	83	132

**(B) The number of staff currently needed to provide VR services:**

AZRSA continues to be faced with high vacancy levels. There were 47 vacancies on January 1, 2008.

	2007	2008
47 vacancies as of January 1, 2008		
Rehabilitation Services Specialist III	25	24
Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation & Mobility Spec	0	4
Rehabilitation Program Representative	9	10
Rehabilitation Supervisor	8	3
Rehabilitation Technician	4	6

**(C) Projections of the number of personnel who will be needed to serve VR clients in five years:**

Projections of the number of individuals who will be needing services are as follows:

The Arizona census projects a 14% growth in population resulting in a projected increase of the potential of VR clients needing services.		23,514
The number of clients served in 2007		20,626

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Projected number of Rehabilitation Counselors to retire in the next 5 years		65
Projected number of Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation and Mobility Specialists to retire in the next 5 years		4
Projected number of Program Representatives to retire in the next 5 years		11
Projected number of Supervisors to retire in the next 5 years		13
Projected number of additional staff positions (Rehabilitation Counselors and Program Representatives) needed to provide services to clients in 5 years		42
Projected number of Supervisors needed in 5 years		4

#### (2) Personnel Development

The following chart lists the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing VR professionals, and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of these institutions with the necessary credentials:

	2007	2008
Number of AZRSA personnel graduated to-date from the University of Arizona with a Masters degree in Rehabilitation Counseling	102	113
Number of AZRSA staff graduating with Masters in Counseling or related degrees from other universities in 2007	1	3
Number of staff enrolled in the University of Arizona Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program full time (2 or 3 year option)	28	26
Number of staff enrolled at other Colleges/University in CSPD plan (includes three enrolled in the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling distance learning class, San Diego State University)	9	14
Number of staff who have applied to the University of Arizona for Fall 2008		11
Number of students enrolled in Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) that are graduating in May/June 2008 with degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling, Counseling or a related degree and the number enrolled in programs that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals. University of Arizona students in rehabilitation counseling	Enrolled	Grad 2008

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programs		
• Bachelor		2
• Masters		
○ On-campus	13	9
○ AZRSA work-study students	26	11
• Doctorate	11	1
Arizona State University		
• Masters in Counseling	130	25
Northern Arizona University		
• Masters in Counseling		81
• Masters in School Counseling		77
University of Phoenix		
• Masters in Counseling	200	22
Ottawa University		
• Masters in Counseling	197	33
San Diego State University		
On Line Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling		31
Note: All are currently employed.		
• Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling On-Campus	62	9

#### **(b) Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel.**

The development, updating, and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel are as follows:

The AZRSA goal is that all staff who provide professional services to the public rehabilitation client will meet the “qualified” staff personnel standards established for the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration. The achievement of this goal is possible only when all current staff have achieved qualified standards and there are enough new qualified candidates available to meet the current and future needs of the AZRSA.

In keeping with the assurance letter dated September 30, 2007, AZRSA has taken the necessary steps to ensure that the functions of a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor will only be performed by staff that meet the agency’s selected personnel standard, or are engaged in the training to achieve the qualifications required under the standard within a defined period or time.

Specifically, the current CSPD plan has the following objectives. These objectives and progress against these objectives are reviewed and updated

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annually:

<i>CSPD OBJECTIVES:</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>On-Going</i>	<i>In Process</i>
Set CSPD standards	X		
Improve RSA's personnel data system	X		
Compile database of professional staff and their degrees	X		
Update and report annually on CSPD status	X		
Obtain professional development plans from all staff who don't meet AZRSA CSPD standards		X	
a. Update plans annually	X		
b. Obtain plans for new staff		X	
Provide training options for staff to obtain a masters degree		X	
a. Provide tuition reimbursements for individual classes		X	
b. Provide sponsorship of a 2-year masters degree program in Rehabilitation through the University of Arizona		X	
Provide CSPD graduate rehabilitation classes, from the University of Arizona to prepare for masters degree or to meet standard		X	
Commit funds to support CSPD plan		X	
Review transcripts to provide guidance to staff regarding meeting qualified staff standard		X	
Reimburse staff for CRC exam and renewal fees		X	
Provide CRC Exam Prep class and study materials for the Online University of Wisconsin-Stout Prep Class		X	
Increase counselor salary	X		
Provide internship sites 5 paid interns for fall, 2007		X	
Develop new strategies for recruitment and			X

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<i>CSPD OBJECTIVES:</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>On-Going</i>	<i>In Process</i>
retention			
Change MQ to reflect qualified staff standard	X		
Establish salary incentive for staff who have or obtain qualified staff standard	X		
Increase new hires who meet qualified staff standard		X	
Monitor progress of CSPD plan		X	
Review transcripts of new hires to determine if they meet qualified staff standard.		X	

**Analysis:** There is a need to recruit qualified applicants due to increased partnerships, client growth, and staff turnover. Based on the 2000 Census, there is a projected average increase in the Arizona population of 14% over a five-year period, which will result in an increase in the number of individuals with disabilities needing services. In 2006, the AZRSA received additional state match from the Arizona State Legislature, resulting in increased funding for the rehabilitation program for SFY 2007. Included in the additional funds were allocations for five new supervisor positions and 29 new counselor positions. These positions were established and filled in 2007.

There continues to be competition from the private sector for qualified rehabilitation counselors. Finding individuals who meet the qualified staff standard to work in small rural offices is extremely difficult. Although qualified applicants are interviewed, they do not always readily accept job offers, in part due to the low salary. Qualified employees sometimes leave when they discover the complexity and demands of the work involved. Other reasons for leaving include increased demand for specialized expertise in the labor market, uncertainties in the field of rehabilitation about the future of the public VR program, consumers posing complex challenges, a better job, more money, relocating, and retirement. In addition, individuals accept job offers for the educational benefit, but seek other employment after completing the degree and satisfying the payback requirements. New employees who do not meet the qualified staff standard will start the job and sign an agreement to meet the qualified standard within six years. However, once they start working and they realize the difficulty of working and attending school, they often decide to resign. This is particularly an issue for individuals who have a masters degree that does not meet standard, requiring them to get another degree.

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The turnover rate in 2007 was as follows:

Rehabilitation Counselors	13.78%
Rehabilitation Teachers	12.50%
Program Representatives	33.33%
Rehabilitation Supervisors	23.33%

In 2008, a study was conducted of the RSA graduates from the University of Arizona Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling since 1994. The study revealed that 51 of the 132 graduates had resigned for some of the reasons listed above.

In 2007, 18 qualified staff resigned, retired or were promoted to Central Office, no longer serving clients. Eight were graduates of the University of Arizona Masters in the Rehabilitation Counseling program, and two completed degrees with educational assistance.

**Coordination:** Coordination with institutions of higher education for continuing education and recruitment has focused primarily with the University of Arizona, which is the only university in the state that has a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program. In 2008, six state and private universities with counseling programs were contacted regarding their counseling programs. AZRSA learned there were more students in their counseling programs than expected, with a number of graduates expected in 2008. With the exception of San Diego State University, placement directors are not very knowledgeable about the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Recruitment and retention is an area that AZRSA plans to focus on in 2008 to reach potential counseling graduates. As a result, plans will be established to increase communication with state and private universities that offer a Masters Degree in Counseling and Social Work. Graduates from these programs can meet the qualified staff standard with up to five additional specific course requirements that are available from the University of Arizona or other schools who have online programs in rehabilitation counseling.

Three AZRSA managers serve on the University of Arizona's Advisory Committee providing input regarding rehabilitation education curricula and its relevance to the State VR program, as well as opportunities to discuss strategies for recruitment of graduates. An average of 40 students graduate yearly from its various rehabilitation training programs.

Two paid internship positions provide Masters degree students an opportunity for an internship with the public VR program. It is hoped that this may encourage students to intern in rural areas. Our experience with interns is that it often leads to employment with the state vocational rehabilitation program. In the Fall 2007, the paid intern positions were double-filled to hire five interns in Tucson. In addition to internships, other joint activities include the establishment of practicum placements in local VR offices. There have been discussions with the University of Arizona to begin having presentations



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for on-campus students by AZRSA staff to increase the awareness of the public program as a career choice. This activity needs to be conducted with other universities. All of these activities enhance the opportunity to recruit graduates.

Professional organizations have not provided a significant opportunity for recruitment of qualified staff. The Arizona Rehabilitation Association (ARA) is a small organization, but one with whom the state agency has a long relationship. Joint conferences have been held for many years, staff have attended “brown bag training sessions” and registration is paid for counselors to attend ARA seminars and workshops. The National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) conference was held in Tucson in the Fall of 2007. AZRSA partnered with the ARA and the Pacific Region Rehabilitation Association to hold a one-day pre-conference training that increased awareness about the rehabilitation program in Arizona. A statewide rehabilitation conference is planned for 2008 by AZRSA and ARA. AZRSA plans to have a recruitment booth at this event where our new recruitment brochures, banner and table displays about our program will be used.

**Recruitment of Individuals with Disabilities and Minorities:** Recruitment of individuals with a disability and minorities remains an ongoing priority. Utilization of the agency’s Project Hire (administered by the AZRSA) has been an effective tool for recruiting and hiring persons with disabilities. The AZRSA has been advertising nationally in [Hispanicjob.com](http://Hispanicjob.com) and [Asianjob.com](http://Asianjob.com). The AZRSA has successfully recruited individuals to enroll in the University of Arizona Bachelor’s in Rehabilitation Counseling program as a step in the career ladder. Employees with disabilities are provided services and accommodations to ensure that they can be successful in these programs. The AZRSA has continued to increase the number of disabled and minority staff hired over the past few years. Fourteen individuals with disabilities have been hired as navigators through a Navigator Grant, and four have been promoted to rehabilitation counselors. One of the navigators is graduating from the University of Arizona Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Program in May, 2008. Four other individuals with disabilities are also in this Masters program.

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A review of statistics shows the following for filled positions as of January, 2008:

Diversity	RSS III Counselors	RISS III	Program Representative	Supervisor
Male	68 (34%)	3 (33%)	13 (48%)	15 (48%)
Female	131 (66%)	6 (67%)	14 (52%)	16 (52%)
Caucasian	130 (65%)	7 (78%)	24 (89%)	27 (87%)
African American	18 (9%)	1 (11%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)
Asian	7 (4%)	0	0	0
American Indian	4 (2%)	0	0	0
AINW	1 (1%)	0	0	0
Hispanic	34 (17%)	1 (11%)	1 (4%)	3 (10%)
UNSP	5 (2%)	0	0	0
Disabled	35 (18%)	2 (22%)	1 (4%)	5 (16%)

##### Arizona Population Statistics\*

63.8% Caucasian

2.9% African American

1.7% Asian

4.5% American Indian

25.3% Hispanic American

\*2000 population statistics, U. S. Census Bureau

#### (c) Personnel Standards

- (1) Standards which are consistent with any national or state approved or recognized certification, licensing, and registration.**

The AZRSA considers it a priority to retain and/or hire personnel who meet national standards for rehabilitation counseling. The National Commission on Rehabilitation Counseling Certification (CRCC) education and experience standards have been adopted by Arizona as the CSPD qualified staff standard. Counselors are not being required to take the CRCC examination itself, but they must meet CRCC's criteria for the exam.

- (2) Steps that the State plans to take in accordance with the written plan, see (b), to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet the standards.**

Although the AZRSA uses the CRCC exam eligibility requirements as the CSPD standard, all staff do not yet meet the standard. As a result, the AZRSA

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continues to recruit and retain staff that meet the standard and to retrain those who do not meet the qualified staff standard. All managers, supervisors and professional staff are knowledgeable about the CSPD standard and its requirements. New staff that do not meet the qualifications are required to read and sign an agreement that they will meet the qualified staff standard within six years of hire.

In 2006, a three-year extension of the University of Arizona and AZRSA Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) was negotiated. This on-going agreement provides for a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling for AZRSA employees. This agreement has been in effect since 1990. In 2007, this IGA was amended to supplement the University of Arizona's national RSA CSPD grant that pays for student tuition and school supplies. Due to the significant increase in tuition costs over the past several years, the CSPD grant no longer covered these costs. With this supplement, a reduction in the number of AZRSA students each year was avoided. The budget for this program for 2007-2008 was \$130,353 and for 2008-2009 it is \$135,609.

For the past five years, the University of Arizona (UA) has continued to provide three graduate courses (CSPD classes) each year for twenty AZRSA employees in each class. The amended AZRSA/UA agreement included funding for the tuition for one of these CSPD classes each year.

### **(3) The written plan to hire and retrain personnel within the designated state unit to meet the qualified staff standard.**

#### **(A) Specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel:**

**Personnel Process:** Since 1999, AZRSA has had a waiver from the personnel rules to allow for direct hire. This waiver reduces the time needed to complete a new hire and facilitates competition for qualified applicants in the labor market. AZRSA works closely with state personnel staff to ensure that qualified applicants are placed on hiring lists when direct hire is not in effect. District managers and supervisors are encouraged to increase their efforts to recruit qualified applicants locally. The personnel manager works closely with supervisors regarding their staffing needs. The DES has an on-line recruiting and application system, which simplifies the application process and provides on-line access to current job openings. All new hires are reviewed by the personnel manager and approved by the administrator to ensure that applicants meeting the qualified staff standard are considered and hired, if appropriate.

The minimum qualifications (MQs) for the counselor series were changed in 2004 by the State's Personnel Classifications Unit, to read "must have a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling or Counseling within six years of hire." This change enables enforcement of the AZRSA's requirement that counseling staff who are not CSPD qualified must work toward obtaining a Master's degree that meets the standard.

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There is an agreement requiring signatures by new staff stating that they will meet the standard in six years. Failure to provide documentation each year that they are working toward this goal could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

**Salary and Incentives:** The AZRSA continues to work with the DES Human Resources Administration on strategies to assist in the recruitment and retention of employees who meet the qualified staff standard. In late 2006, a new salary package was approved for the counselor series, including the Rehabilitation Services Specialist III, Program Representative, Rehabilitation Teacher, Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Rehabilitation Supervisor. The salary grades and Special Recruitment Rates (SRR) were adjusted. Incumbents' salaries were increased to the new SRR or by 2.5%, whichever was greater.

An education/certification stipend (\$1,000) was established for current and new Rehabilitation Services Specialists III, Rehabilitation Teachers, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Rehabilitation Program Representatives and Rehabilitation Supervisors who meet the qualified staff standard. This salary package was implemented on July 1, 2007, retroactive to July 1, 2006.

Individuals are supported in obtaining professional certification that reflects the qualified staff standard by AZRSA paying for the exam fees upon notice of passing, and for renewal fees. The registration fees for an on-line CRC preparation class are paid for staff when requested. The certifications that are supported include Certification for Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC), certification by the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) for Rehabilitation Teachers (RT); and for Orientation and Mobility Specialists (O&M). Certification by CRC, AER, ACVREP and National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB).

**Recruitment:** The AZRSA, along with other rehabilitation state agencies and the national RSA office, continues to identify and implement strategies to improve recruitment and hiring practices. Participating in job fairs available in most districts, holding our own job fairs, advertising in newspapers, participating in the national job bank and minority-focused employment sites, as well as listing openings on the AZRSA website are some current strategies. In 2007, the AZRSA participated in six job fairs, which included four Jobing.com job fairs in Phoenix and Tucson and a Tucson Newspapers Diversity Career Fair. Staff attended Career Days at Northern Arizona University (NAU), Arizona State University (ASU), and the University of Arizona (UA). The Arizona Workforce Connection Job Fair and recruitment at the National Council of Rehabilitation Educators national conference were other outreach activities this past year. This was a significant increase in recruitment efforts by AZRSA. In addition, as part of

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a marketing project, recruitment brochures, banners and table top covers were designed and purchased to use in recruitment efforts.

Recruitment and retention is part of the AZRSA's current strategic plan. Objectives and strategies include increasing the retention rate of VR counselors, assessing current recruitment practices, and strategizing steps for improvement. Other strategies that are being developed include feedback from employee-satisfaction surveys, employee recognition, mentoring, professional leadership opportunities, and an analysis of the personnel process to identify and rectify barriers to expedite the hiring process. Furthermore, there are a number of strategies identified to increase the supply of applicants. Currently, work groups are addressing these strategies to develop plans of action and to implement strategies.

**Retention:** In the area of retention, there is an objective in the AZRSA strategic plan to increase employee satisfaction with strategies identified to accomplish this objective. In 2008, the employee satisfaction survey was analyzed, and the AZRSA Executive Management Team developed an action plan with project team leaders and time lines. Four major categories of concern to be addressed are: Communication, Staff Recognition, Personnel and Supervision.

In 2007, three individuals who attended the Post Employment Training in Rehabilitation (PETRA) at San Diego State University completed a project with the purpose of addressing retention. Upon completion of this project, this group presented their findings and recommendations to the AZRSA Extended Management Team.

**Job Simplification/Restructuring:** For the past five years, the AZRSA has addressed the complexity of the counselor's job as part of the agency's five-year strategic plan. The difficulty and complexity of the rehabilitation counselor's job, combined with low salaries, have been identified as reasons for counselors leaving for other jobs. One strategy was the expansion of the original pilot in four offices addressing changes in processes, work roles and other issues, thus creating Payment/Procurement Technician (PPT) positions. The pilot was fully implemented and there has been ongoing analysis to determine its effectiveness. In 2007, a PPT CORE training was developed that included policies and procedures, services and service codes, and an overview of procurement. Training on the payment system and procedures, vendor management and the Integrated Rehabilitation Information System (IRIS) is also provided. Upon completion of CORE, all PPTs attend a basic training on procurement and diversity procurement through the State Procurement Office in order to gain purchasing delegation from the Department of Economic Security Office of Procurement. Monthly meetings have been held this past year in the districts, and quarterly meetings of PPTs and supervisors are held on videoconference. This has improved communication and problem resolution.

**(B) The specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the qualified staff standard.**

The AZRSA makes every effort to recruit and hire qualified staff; however, there continues to be a shortage of individuals who meet the qualified staff standard in Arizona. This is due to several factors: applicants unwilling to apply and accept positions with the AZRSA at the state salary, lack of finding qualified staff willing to work in rural areas, and the lack of an adequate number of graduates from the universities.

In January 2008, there were 38 vacancies for counselor and program representative positions statewide. In 2007, 52 new counselors, program representatives and rehabilitation teachers and 7 supervisors were hired. Forty seven did not meet standard.

Newly hired counselors, not meeting the CSPD standard, will have six years from date of hire to meet CSPD standard.

**(C) Procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period.**

The AZRSA conducts an annual analysis using the CSPD database to compare progress in meeting the standard. This was completed in February 2008.

**(D) The identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel who do not meet the qualified staff standard and the identification of a plan to train such individuals to meet the applicable standards.**

**Counselors:** The State of Arizona has identified the following minimum qualifications, (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA)) for professional counselors (Rehabilitation Service Specialist III and Program Representative): a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in a non-related field, plus three years of related human service work experience, a Bachelor's degree in a related field (defined), plus two years of human service work experience, or a Master's degree in a non-related field plus one year of human service experience, or a Master's degree in a related field, including Rehabilitation Counseling or CRC certification.

**Rehabilitation Technicians:** The State of Arizona has identified the following minimum qualifications (KSAs): an Associate of Arts/Sciences or Applied Sciences in a discipline related to human services, a high school diploma or GED and two years of work experience in a vocational rehabilitation or independent living program, or three years of experience in an organized program providing services to individuals with disabilities. Completion of a certificate program in disability awareness, social services, substance abuse or other behavioral services field from an accredited college substitutes for one year of the required experience. Any combination of training and experience that meet the KSAs may be

substituted.

Individuals who do not meet the qualified standard must complete a professional development plan that outlines their course of study to meet the standard within 6 years.

### **(d) Staff Development and Training**

#### **(1) A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology.**

Policies, procedures and activities ensure that all personnel employed receive appropriate and adequate training.

Competencies have been established for VR counselor and program representative positions, including specialty counselors. A competency-based comprehensive staff development and training program provides both basic and continuing education for staff.

In 2005, AZRSA received a five-year grant for Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) In-Service Training, which included funding for special projects/training. A performance-based report of progress is provided for this grant annually.

The annual training plan is traditionally based on a training needs assessment for all staff. In addition, there is a comprehensive training needs assessment for counselors and partners working with individuals with severe mental illness. This is accomplished as part of the vocational plan development in each district for the AZRSA/Behavioral Health interagency agreement. Staff input is solicited for specialty counselor, supervisor, rehabilitation technician, PPT and secretary training sessions to ensure that topics selected meet current needs. Program managers and the State Rehabilitation Council provide input on training needs.

Two major initiatives in 2007 and 2008 resulted in statewide training for all staff, which was provided in each district. These initiatives were the pilot of a new performance-based contract in employment services and the implementation of a new policy manual. The policy manual changes were introduced at the same time as LIBERA, the new case management system that is being developed. A Rural Counselor Conference addressed a variety of topics that were recommended by a work group representing all the rural districts. Region IX Regional Continuing Education Program (RCEP) continues to be a valuable partner by assisting with six training sessions in the annual training plan, with

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some offered twice a year. A Supervisor Academy is planned for Fall 2008 offered by RCEP. This session will be offered in Arizona instead of San Diego, where it has been taught in the past. This will enable 25 supervisors to attend. At the request of a consumer group, statewide training was held on autism with sessions in Phoenix, Tucson and Flagstaff.

#### **Staff Development and Training is divided three groups:**

##### **Basic Training**

Basic training includes: New employee orientation, a CORE training series for new counselors, a set of advanced core classes to supplement basic CORE, a rehabilitation technician CORE training, a secretary CORE training, a PPT CORE training, training on the AZRSA's client management information system (IRIS), and programmatic training for professional and clerical support staff. Employees also have access to training on a variety of computer software. Training for all staff on the new case management system, LIBERA, will take place during Fall 2008, after the system is piloted by several offices.

Training is provided on the Rehabilitation Act, regulations and state policy. Classes include sessions on assessment, vocational counseling, preparing your client for the job search and job placement, plan development, assistive technology, case management and case documentation. There is a focus on relationship management and client informed choice throughout all of the core curriculum modules. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) are also covered in Counselor CORE. Rehabilitation Technicians attend the Counselor CORE in addition to the Rehabilitation Technician CORE.

Advanced CORE classes are offered, with several topics provided twice a year. New counselors/representatives are required to attend, and more experienced staff often attend. The topics for these classes are:

- Ethics, Basic and Advanced;
- Assistive Technology Parts I and II;
- Vocational Counseling Tools;
- Supported Employment;
- Counseling Skill Building Practicum (new);
- Cultural Diversity/Disability Culture;
- Using Internet in Rehabilitation Practice;
- Social Security 101;
- Introduction to Vocational Guidance and Career Counseling;
- Client Service Management;
- Use of the Internet in Rehabilitation;
- New Employee Orientation; and
- Preparing Your Client for Their Job Search.



### **Skill Building and Continuing Education**

Skill building and continuing education for all levels of field staff are provided each year. The state's Arizona Government University (AZGU) offers a variety of professional development classes to all staff. Training sessions for supervisors are in the annual training plan, and new supervisors are required to complete the DES New Supervisor Academy within one year of hire or promotion. Central and District Office staff also have training opportunities through the AZGU and out-service training that meet their specific training needs. This past year, out-service training was approved, for example, in the areas of finance and accounting, information technology, substance abuse, The Arizona Deaf-Blind Project conference, the Boston University Psychiatric Rehabilitation Approach Workshop, the Native American Summit and "Breaking the Myths of Aging."

The AZRSA partners with a variety of entities to provide skill building and continuing education through the Annual Transition Conference, in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education Special Student Services, and the Annual Assistive Technology Summer Institute, in partnership with Northern Arizona University and the Arizona Assistive Technology Project (AZTAP).

### **Career Development**

The AZRSA has established a career ladder in the rehabilitation counselor series. A program of educational assistance, career counseling, and use of educational plans assists staff in obtaining academic credit to facilitate career advancement. The DES educational assistance policy provides prepaid tuition and books.

As part of the plan for leadership development and capacity building, staff participate in management and leadership programs made available by Region IX RCEP and through the DES Office of Management and Development (OMD) in partnership with Arizona State University (ASU). Employees participate in the PETRA Graduate Certificate Programs in Rehabilitation Administration offered by RCEP IX, which is funded by a federal RSA grant. Supervisors attend RCEP IX Supervisory Academy for Rehabilitation.

#### **(2) Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals of significant knowledge from research and other sources.**

To support staff development and other training activities, the AZRSA maintains a library of training resources and materials including videotapes, results of research, and best practices. Materials are disseminated to staff in training sessions, and by making resource materials available in local offices. Employees have access to the internet as a resource, and have been provided training and a resource manual for using the Internet in Rehabilitation. Since 2007, career counseling tools have been purchased for counselors and rehabilitation technicians to use with clients. Copies of the annual Institute on Rehabilitation Issues publications are also purchased each year.

**(e) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs**

**Availability of personnel within the designated state unit or obtaining the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English-speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.**

The Arizona state personnel system facilitates recruitment of qualified staff who are bilingual. Efforts continue to increase the number of employees who are bilingual. A salary stipend is paid to staff that use a second language at least 20% of their time. There are currently 55 people in AZRSA who receive a stipend.

If a bilingual staff member is not available, the AZRSA purchases the needed interpreting service from established contracts.

Video Relay Service (VRS) has been implemented with twenty systems in place throughout the state in an effort to improve communication accessibility for persons who are deaf. AZRSA is continuing the process of expanding this service to all rural offices so that consumers will be able to access services immediately instead of waiting for a future appointment when an interpreter can be scheduled.

Accessible forms/materials: All AZRSA materials, including training materials, are made available in alternative media. Each district has access to resources, to Braille materials and to provide print in alternative media per client and staff request. The DES has translated materials into other languages. Staff are provided with accessible computers, note takers, ergonomic keyboards and other devices as needed for accommodations. A new position has been established that has the responsibility to ensure that all agency forms are accessible.

The new training center will be fully accessible, including having an accessible work station in the computer training room, a resource room with an accessible work station and special chairs.

**(f) Coordination with Personnel Development under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

Transition from School-to-Work (STW) remains an important part of the AZRSA's program of services. Competencies for STW counselors are in place, and there are specialty counselors in each district. AZRSA works closely with the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, to provide opportunities for staff to remain current in transition policies and practices. These collaborations have resulted in conferences, specific trainings and joint projects, including monthly meetings with transition staff.